

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-14 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 EUR-25 EB-11 DRC-01 /146 W

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P 101915Z MAY 74

FM AMCONSUL BELIZE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3470

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BELIZE 0251

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, PBOR, BH, GB

SUBJECT: PRELIMINARY TALKS ON GUATEMALA BELIZE DISPUTE

REF: STATE 081513 STATE 091254 GUATEMALA 2242

1. GOVERNOR POSNETT RETURNED TO BELIZE LAST WEEK FROM HOME LEAVE AND CONSULTATIONS IN LONDON AND INVITED ME TO LUNCH YESTERDAY IN THE COURSE OF WHICH HE FILLED ME IN ON SOME RECENT DEVELOPMENTS.

2. H. E. HAD FOUND WHITEHALL PREOCCUPIED WITH CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT AND HE HAD HAD DIFFICULTY GETTING HIGH LEVEL OFFICIALS TO FOCUS ON BELIZE. NEVERTHELESS, HE HAD BEEN ABLE TO SATISFY HIMSELF THAT NO CHANGE IN HMG POLICY NOR ANY DIMINUTION OF BRITISH PRESENCE HERE WAS IN THE OFFING. OBVIOUSLY, HOWEVER, ANY PROSPECT OF EXTRICATION FROM BELIZE WOULD BE EVEN MORE WELCOME THAN BEFORE.

3. PREMIER PRICE HAD TOLD THE GOVERNOR ABOUT HIS TRIP TO ATLANTA, MOST INTERESTING ITEM OF WHICH WAS THAT PRICE, ACCOMPANIED BY ATTORNEY GENERAL HARRISON COURTNEY, HAD HAD A MEETING WITH GUATEMALAN FONMIN ARENALES, AT WHICH DUDLEY THOMPSON, JAMAICAN MINISTER OF STATE, HAD ALSO BEEN PRESENT, TO DISCUSS TALKS AT WHICH LONG-WAITED GUATEMALAN PROPOSAL WAS TO BE UNVEILED.

4. H. E. SAID PRICE HAD TOLD HIM HE WAS CONVINCED GUATEMALANS
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WERE STALLING. HE HAD BEEN ESPECIALLY DISILLUSIONED BY ARENALES'

ASSERTION THAT OUTGOING GUATEMALAN PRESIDENT ARANA HAD NOT BEEN APPRISED OF DETAILS OF PUTATIVE GUATEMALAN PROPOSAL AS THIS HAD CAST DOUBT ON GOOD FAITH OF ARENALES ASSURANCE TO HMG REP AMERY IN NEW YORK LAST AUGUST THAT COG HAD A FULLY WORKED OUT PROPOSAL READY TO TABLE AFTER GUATEMALAN ELECTIONS.

5. ONE ENCOURAGING DEVELOPMENT PRICE HAD REPORTED WAS THAT ARENALES HAD SAID COG, CONTRARY TO ITS PREVIOUS POSITION, WAS NOW WILLING TO HAVE GOB PARTICIPATION IN TALKS. PRICE INTENDED TO TAKE HIM UP ON THIS ALTHOUGH HE WAS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT CHANCES OF ANYTHING ACCEPTABLE EMERGING AND ALTHOUGH GOB PARTICIPATION IN TALKS INVOLVED SOME RISK FOR HIM (A LEAK MIGHT LEND CREDENCE TO PERENNIAL OPPOSITION CHARGE THAT PRICE IS PREDISPOSED TO SELL OUT TO GUATEMALA). PRICE PLANNED TO SEND COURTNEY TO REPRESENT GOB IF TALKS MATERIALIZED. GOVERNOR SAID HMG WOULD PROBABLY SEND A JUNIOR MINISTER LEVEL REPRESENTATIVE FROM LONDON.

6. GOVERNOR BROUGHT UP SUBJECT OF RECENTLY EXPRESSED MEXICAN INTEREST IN PARTICIPATING IN ANY AGREEMENT ON BELIZE AND EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT GIVING MEXICO ACCESS TO CHETUMAL THROUGH MEXICAN TERRITORIAL WATERS MIGHT PROVE MORE DIFFICULT THAN FIRST SUPPOSED. IN ANY CASE, IT WAS HIS UNDERSTANDING MEXICAN PARTICIPATION IN NEGOTIATIONS WAS NOT ENVISAGED UNTIL A MUCH LATER STAGE.

7. ON SUBJECT OF TOKEN BRITISH TROOP WITHDRAWAL, GOVERNOR SAID ANY REDUCTION AT THIS TIME WOULD RESULT IN AN ILLOGICAL MILITARY SITUATION AND THAT ALTHOUGH AN EVENTUAL REDUCTION AT A MORE ADVANCED STAGE OF NEGOTIATIONS MIGHT UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES (E.G., IF TROOP REDUCTION WERE THE LAST REMAINING OBSTACLE TO AN AGREEMENT) BE CONSIDERED, HE FELT CERTAIN HMG WOULD NOT BE INTERESTED IN EVEN A TOKEN REDUCTION AS A PRECONDITION TO TALKS.

8. ON SUBJECT OF ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF AN INDEPENDENT BELIZE, HE SAID NEITHER PRICE NOR HMG WAS AT ALL WORRIED. HE FELT CERTAIN BRITISH AID WOULD CONTINUE AT PRESENT LEVELS AND SAID HE THOUGHT IT PROBABLE BELIZE COULD COUNT ON RECEIVING QUOTE A SORT OF A DOWERY UNQUOTE FROM HMG, SO GREAT WOULD BE THE LATTER'S RELIEF IN UNBURDENING ITSELF OF ITS PRESENT RESPONSIBILITIES HERE.

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9. SPECULATING ON CONCESSIONS COG MIGHT EXPECT FROM BELIZE, GOVERNOR LISTED FREE ACCESS TO PORT OF BELIZE WHICH WOULD POSE NO DIFFICULTY AND SOME ARRANGEMENT FOR PATROLING BORDER. NOTING THAT PREVIOUS TALKS HAD FOUNDERED ON THIS POINT BECAUSE OF UN-ACCEPATBILITY OF HAVING GUATEMALA TROOPS IN BELIZEAN TERRITORY, HE SAID THERE HAD BEEN SOME THOUGHT GIVEN TO GETTING A JAMAICAN CONTINGENT TO TAKE THIS ON, BUT THAT THIS WOULD HAVE DISADVANTAGES. A MORE LIKELY POSSIBILITY, HE SAID, WOULD BE AN INTERNATIONAL

FORCE OF SOME KIND DRAWN FROM NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES, BUT THAT UNTIL SOME PROGRESS WAS MADE TOWARD AGREEMENT THE MATTER COULD NOT EVEN BE BROACHED TO PROSPECTIVE CONTRIBUTING GOVERNMENTS.

10. COMMENT: GOVERNOR CLEARLY SHARES PRICE'S PESSIMISM RE CHANCES OF PROGRESS BUT GENERAL IMPRESSION I GOT WAS THAT HE IS CONSCIOUS OF STRONG AND GROWING DESIRE ON PART OF HMG TO GET OUT OF BELIZE. IF GUATEMALAN PROPOSAL IS SLOW IN EMERGING HE THOUGHT THE BRITISH CONSUL IN GUATEMALA MIGHT BE INSTRUCTED TO DO SOME GENTLE PRODDING.

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